



A
BOOK
THAT SHAPED ME


LIBRARY OF CONGRESS
NATIONAL

BOOK FESTIVAL

2014

LOC.GOV/BOOKFEST/KIDS-TEACHERS/BOOKSTHATSHAPE



2014 Summer Writing Contest

The "A Book That Shaped Me" Summer Writing Contest encourages rising 5th & 6th graders to reflect on a book that has made a personal impact on their lives. The contest is administered through local public library systems in the Mid-Atlantic region, and top winners are honored at the Library of Congress in Washington, DC.

In this, the third year of the contest, nearly 300 libraries in Washington, DC, Maryland, Virginia, Delaware, Pennsylvania, and West Virginia signed up to administer the contest. Members of the American Association of School Librarians, a division of the American Library Association, comprised the first-round panel of judges to determine the state finalists. State and grand prize winners were selected by a panel assembled by the Library of Congress that included educators, children's authors, and Library of Congress staff.

We are thrilled to announce the state finalists, state winners, and grand prize winners of the 2014 "A Book That Shaped Me" National Book Festival Summer Writing Contest! Thanks to everyone who wrote an essay and entered the contest this year.

Grand Prize & State Winners

1st Place Grand Prize & Virginia State Winner

Ananda Kalukin

"Bird Songs Bible" by Les Beletsky
Arlington Public Library-Central Library

Pennsylvania State Winner

Audrey Gehm

"Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone" by J.K. Rowling
Butler County Federated Library-Mars Area Public Library

2nd Place Grand Prize & Virginia State Finalist

Gavin Dent

"Omaha Beach and Beyond: The Long March of Sergeant Bob Slaughter" by John Robert Slaughter
Roanoke County Public Library-South County Library

Maryland State Winner

Isis Marks-Hamilton

"Rosa Parks" by Erinn Banting
Enoch Pratt Free Library-Pennsylvania Avenue Branch

3rd Place Grand Prize & Virginia State Finalist

Caroline Antonipillai

"Matilda" by Ronald Dahl
Arlington Public Library-Central Library

Washington, DC Winner

Kalina Sloat

"The Year of the Dog" by Grace Lin
District of Columbia Public Library-Cleveland Park Library

Delaware State Winner

Sudha Anilkumar

"Out of My Mind" by Sharon Draper
New Castle County Libraries-Brandywine Hundred Library

West Virginia State Winner

Finnian Mungovan

"Ruttkowsky 68: Terrible Horrible" by Mark Jenkins & Nils Muller
Martinsburg-Berkeley County Public Library

State Finalists (winners indicated by asterisks)

Name	Library	Book Title	Author
Washington, DC			
Helena Bello	DC Public Library-Takoma Park Library	<i>Bud, Not Buddy</i>	Christopher Paul
Christian G. Herald	DC Public Library-Takoma Park Library	<i>Counting by 7s</i>	Holly Goldberg Sloan
Pasha Ishaq	DC Public Library-Georgetown Library	<i>1984</i>	George Orwell
Kalina Sloat*	DC Public Library-Cleveland Park Library	<i>The Year of the Dog</i>	Grace Lin
Cassie Zhang	DC Public Library-Tenley-Friendship Library	<i>Uncle Tom's Cabin</i>	Harriet Beecher Stowe
Maryland			
Cora Jackson	Prince George's County Memorial Library System-Hyattsville	<i>When You Reach Me</i>	Rebecca Stead
Isis Marks-Hamilton*	Enoch Pratt Free Library-Pennsylvania	<i>Rosa Parks</i>	Erinn Banting
Ashlie Price	Dorchester County Public Library-Central Library	<i>Lanie</i>	Jane Kurtz
Nathalie Trouba	Prince George's County Memorial Library System-Hyattsville	<i>Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone</i>	J.K. Rowling
Brynn Yates	Dorchester County Public Library-Central Library	<i>Matilda</i>	Roald Dahl
Virginia			
Caroline Antonipillai	Arlington Public Library-Central Library	<i>Matilda</i>	Roald Dahl
Gavin Dent	Roanoke County Public Library-South County Library	<i>Omaha Beach and Beyond: The Long March of Sergeant Bob Slaughter</i>	John Robert Slaughter
Ananda Kalukin*	Arlington Public Library-Central Library	<i>Bird Songs Bible</i>	Les Beletsky
Raquel Mandojana	Arlington Public Library-Central Library	<i>Wonder</i>	R.J. Palacio
Udbhav Muthakana	Prince William Public Library System-Central Community Library	<i>The Chronicles of Narnia</i>	C.S. Lewis
Delaware			
Sudha Anilkumar*	New Castle County-Brandywine Hundred Library	<i>Out of My Mind</i>	Sharon Draper
Madelyn Degnars	New Castle County-Newark Free Library	<i>Wonder</i>	R.J. Palacio
Huda Kose	New Castle County-Newark Free Library	<i>Heidi</i>	Johanna Spyri
Brendan Lewis	Dover Public Library	<i>Who Knew? Hundreds & Hundreds of Questions & Answers for Curious Minds</i>	Bob Strauss
Lucy Verlaque	New Castle County-Newark Free Library	<i>Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone</i>	J.K. Rowling
Pennsylvania			
Amelia Cook	York County Library System-Glatfelter	<i>The Unwanteds</i>	Lisa McMann
Audrey Gehm*	Butler County Federated Library System-Mars Area Public Library	<i>Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone</i>	J.K. Rowling
Carissa George	Free Library of Springfield Township	<i>Esperanza Rising</i>	Pam Muñoz Ryan
Bryce Greco	Hazleton Area Public Library	<i>Who Was Steve Jobs?</i>	Pamela D. Pollack & Meg Belviso
Colton Steltzer	Westmoreland County Federation Library System-Ligonier Valley	<i>TinTin in America</i>	Hergé
West Virginia			
Addie Hughes	Martinsburg-Berkeley County Public Library-Martinsburg Library	<i>Grace's Twist</i>	Melissa Morgan
Finnian Mungovan*	Martinsburg-Berkeley County Public Library-Martinsburg Library	<i>Ruttkowski; 68:Terrible Horrible</i>	Mark Jenkins & Nils Muller
Beth Nichols	Roane County Public Library-Geary Public Library	<i>Runaway Pony</i>	Jeanne Betancourt
Emma Samples	Southern Area Library	<i>The Wonder of Charlie Anne</i>	Kimberly Newton Fusco
Zula Stenger	Southern Area Library	<i>The Vanishing Coin</i>	Kate Egan

Out of My Mind

Sudha Anilkumar

Delaware State Winner

Throughout my life I have read many wonderful books, but none had such a resounding impact on me as *Out of my Mind* written by Sharon M. Draper. This heartwarming tale allowed me to see the world with a new pair of eyes and offered lessons that are very valuable in the epic tale that is life.

This book revolves around Melody, a bright eleven-year-old girl diagnosed with cerebral palsy, a condition that rendered her unable to utter a single word or perform any of the numerous day-to-day tasks without assistance. Though Melody is physically limited, she has a photographic memory. She is a genius pining to be heard. Unfortunately, she has no way to communicate. Melody describes herself as being “locked in a cage without a key or door.” This brings me to my first life lesson - never take things for granted. Every single day, I can get out my bed, say “Good Morning” to my parents and do countless other activities.

Till now I was blinded into believing that everyone could do everything that I could. The author, Sharon M. Draper, made me aware of the fact that others like Melody had no choice but to be silenced. I came to appreciate everything I have. It made me want to help others with cerebral palsy achieve their dreams and give them a chance to reach for the stars. I researched online to find out how I could do this. I am going to volunteer at the Alfred I. DuPont Hospital for Children in Wilmington, DE and be a buddy for a kid with cerebral palsy.

When Melody went to school, some of the obstacles she faced in the new environment were bullies who tormented her simply for being born the way she was. They never realized how much pain it caused Melody. The book showed me the impact that bullying can cause on someone's life. Again, I found myself lucky to have not faced such a situation. Melody did get support from her friends and family, particularly their family friend Mrs. V who eloquently pointed out to Melody's bullies, “Some people have braces on their teeth. Some get braces on their legs. For others, braces won't work and they need wheelchairs and walkers. You are a lucky girl that you only had braces on your teeth. Remember that.” This statement was very touching to me because it showed that we should respect the individuality in everyone rather than harass them because of their originality. I realized that everyone has a burden to carry around and it could be faced in two ways, either you mope about what you don't have, or you cope with the situation using the many things that you do have. Melody's character showed me how easy it is to cope with even the biggest challenges in life.



Matilda

Caroline Antonipillai

3rd Place Grand Prize & Virginia State Finalist

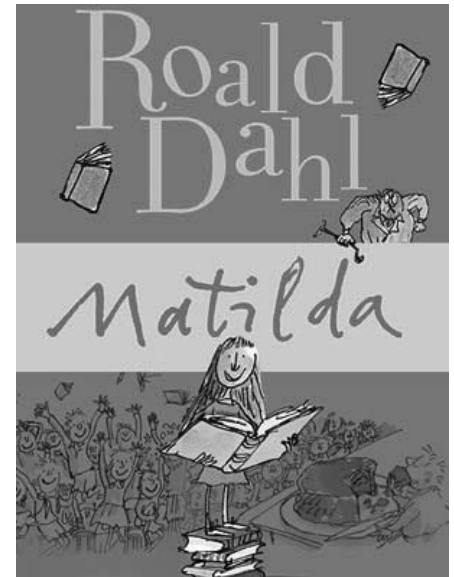
“It is bad enough when parents treat ordinary children as though they were scabs and bunions, but it becomes somehow a lot worse when the child in question is extraordinary.” The child “in question” is Matilda, and not only does she have a big part in her story, she has had a big part in mine. How, you wonder? Reading *Matilda* gave me a new perspective about how differently families work. Secondly, Matilda showed me a strong reader, which inspired me to start reading more. One last way Matilda shaped me is that she is self-motivated, and seeing that has helped me do the same.

Your life is yours; no one life is the same as another, as I see in the world around me, and in *Matilda*. Matilda’s parents are very self-centered, resulting in them having no time for Matilda. At the end of the book, Matilda’s mom shows this by saying: “Why don’t we let her go if that’s what she wants. It will be one less to look after.” Reading *Matilda* showed me that sometimes the situation isn’t so great at home. I figured that everyone had parents at home to support them, so it gave me the perspective to better understand how the kids without parents to support them live and feel.

Matilda is “very fond of Charles Dickens...He makes (her) laugh a lot. Especially Mr. Pickwick.” It was funny to see a five-year-old reading Charles Dickens without having been in school yet. When I read the book, I thought it was cool that she was so good at reading, and all of the other kids were amazed at what she could do. I originally didn’t want to read books above my grade level because my teacher didn’t want us bringing other books into school, but when I read Matilda, I felt like it would be okay to read more challenging books. Once I read *Matilda*, I started trying higher books, it became really fun for me, and it has shown me books that are really interesting.

It is easy to follow a lead, but it is challenging to be different and create your own motivations. Matilda always found it easy to be motivated. In the book, she solves all of her own problems. For example, when her dad says she can’t get a book, telling her “we’ve got a lovely telly with twelve-inch screen and now you come asking for a book!” she finds the library herself and goes to it. She also solves a problem when she figures out how to get rid of Trunchbull, “the prince of darkness.” I had no idea that reading *Matilda* would later help me understand the importance of being self-motivated.

Books can shape people in many different ways, from altering your thinking to changing the way you act. Reading *Matilda* has encouraged me to read more, think differently about families, and be more self-motivated. I have read a LOT of books, but there are very few characters that I actually connect with, Matilda is one of them. I feel like she is growing up with me, talking about new books and still having a big influence.



Bud, Not Buddy

Helena Bello

Washington, DC Finalist

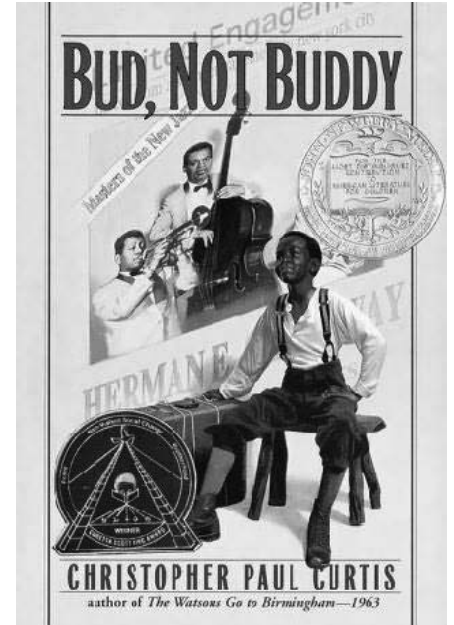
One important book that shaped me was *Bud, Not Buddy* by Christopher Paul Curtis. It showed me what life was like during the Great Depression and it made me appreciate my life now and to persevere during hard times.

In the part of the book where Bud goes to Hooverville, a town of shacks, he describes it as, “It was a bunch of huts and shacks thrown together out of pieces of box and wood and cloth. The Amoses’ shed would have looked like a real fancy house here.” When I read this part I learned how hard life in the Great Depression was, and it was so hard that people had to live in shacks made out of cardboard. It made me feel sad for them and grateful that I have a house that protects me.

Bud had to live in many different foster homes. During the Great Depression families often didn’t have enough money to take care of their kids. When Bud is in his orphanage he thinks, “This was the third foster home I was going to and I was used to packing up and leaving but it still surprises me that there are always a few seconds right after they tell you you’ve got to go when my nose gets all runny and my throat gets all choky and my eyes get all sting-y.” This part made me feel sorry because I can’t imagine my family having to put me in a foster home because they couldn’t afford to take care of me. Bud must have felt like he was helpless and lonely, but he persevered a lot and when he finally found his way to his family, it made me so happy for him.

Throughout the book Bud perseveres even though his mom died and he misses her a ton. Bud carries all of his memories of his mom in his suitcase so he can remember her. This made me feel so sad because he misses his mom and he has so many memories of her. At the end of the book when he finds his grandpa and aunt, he says, “I was carrying Momma inside me and there wasn’t anyone or anything that could take away from that or add to it either.” I learned that you can always remember somebody not by things but by memories in your mind.

Bud, Not Buddy gave me an understanding of what life was like for kids in the Great Depression. I was impressed by Bud’s spirit and how he never gave up even during hard times. This taught me how to be grateful for what I have in my life and during hard times to not give up.



The Unwanteds

Amelia Cook

Pennsylvania Finalist

A book that I have found to have shaped me is *The Unwanteds* by Lisa McMann. First, it has informed me that the concept of creativity is important and a strong thing. Next, it has taught me to believe that anything is possible and anything may happen at any moment. Last, it has told me not to judge any kind of book by its cover, in two different ways. Even though this wonderful book is fiction it still has some great points to it. It has given me some amazing thoughts and inspired me so much.

As I said, it has instructed me that the idea of creativity is important and strong. Without creativity we would have absolutely nothing. Creativity is the idea of inventing things. It is the raw existence of us and the reason we still live today.

“... They see creativity as weakness. After all it could lead to something horrible ... like magic,” says page thirty five. This is an example from the book that shows how strong creativity is. Next, it mentions a man (Mr. Today) saving the creative people (The Unwanteds) from being “eliminated” because he understood how important it was. Last, Mr. Today told The Unwanteds that they could defeat an army with just their creativity.

Next, this book has taught me that anything can happen at any time. First, the Eliminators magically transformed into beautiful animals with, “...Animal like heads and sleek, long necks that melded into huge, stout, strong bodies like the Unwanteds had never seen. The newly transformed Eliminators were covered in a fine layer of shimmering black hair that reflected the sunlight, and their previously frightening red eyes grew kind and intelligent, a rich amber-brown.” Next, when The Unwanted kids were expecting to be eliminated Mr. Today saved them. This shows how anything can happen to anyone. The last surprising thing that happened was, the main character (Alex), who was supposed to be eliminated, talked to his brother (Aaron) which alerted him that they weren't actually being eliminated. Aaron was supposed to not tell anyone, but he surprised Alex by telling the government.

Last, this book has taught me not to judge a book by its cover, in two ways. The first way is, this book is not the kind of book I thought it would be. I expected it to be more of a realistic idea. This book is not that way at all. It is more of a fantastical book. Second, I learned not to judge a book by its cover, meaning don't judge a person by the way they look. In this book a lot of people turn out to be very different than what you would expect. First, as I talked about earlier, all the eliminators turned out to be exactly the opposite of what they were supposed to be. Next, Samheed was very rude at first but he became one of Alex's friends. Last, Aaron turned out to be a snitch because he told the government that Samheed was being creative and in turn made Samheed an Unwanted. These are the reasons you should not judge a book by its cover. From this book I learned that judging something by the way it looks could make you miss out on something nice.

To conclude, a book that shaped me is “*The Unwanteds*” by Lisa McMann. It has taught me more than one thing about life. First, I have learned from this book that the thought of creativity is important and powerful. Next, I learned that anything is possible to happen at any time and in any way. And last, I have been taught by this book not to judge anything by the way it is on the outside. This book has been my favorite book since I first read it.



Wonder

Madelyn Degnars

Delaware Finalist

I have to say; choosing only one book that shaped me was extremely hard. I have read many, many good books that change the way I look at many things. I had actually *wondered* about this topic for days until I chose a book-and that book is *Wonder*, by R.J. Palacio. (But seriously, *wondered*, *Wonder*? Pun definitely intended.)

Wonder is about 5th grader, August Pullman, who has a facial deformity. He has been homeschooled all his life, and with a lot of encouragement from his parents, August goes to a real school. You can probably infer by yourself that going to school with a deformity isn't easy-because going to school with a regular face isn't easy either! Although something tells me it all works out! (Wink!)



One of the questions I asked myself a lot as I was reading *Wonder* was how I would react if a kid like August came to school, because I know I wouldn't be mean to him, but would I sit next to him at lunch? Would I be able to have a conversation with him like the only thing *not normal* about him was his face? Would I play the "Plague", a cheese-touch type game behind his back? I want to answer yes, I would sit next him, yes I would treat him normally, and no I won't play the game-but that feels unrealistic, because when you're at school, it's really easy just to go along with the crowd. Because this is just me inferring, but I'm sure most of the "crowd" would be rude to or ignore the "real-life-August." But this book was kind of like that *Ooooooh*, moment you get when you finally get that one math problem right. It was like, no, I wouldn't sit next to him, and maybe I would treat him differently, and I probably wouldn't play the "Plague" but who knows? *Wonder* taught me that maybe I should sit with "real-life-Augusts", and I shouldn't treat him/them differently, and the game ... well that speaks for itself. But in the end, this connects to a deeper theme-that "don't judge a book by its cover," that comes up a lot in *Wonder*.

"I wish everyday could be Halloween. We could all wear masks all the time. Then we could walk around and get to know each other before we got to see what we looked like under the masks." August says this as he talks about Halloween. It's definitely not the most well-known quote in the entire book but I think it's an important one. It's just simple, and one of those quotes that I just like for some reason. I think what August is trying to get at is that, if no one knew what we actually looked like, only the masks we wore, they couldn't judge you from the outside-if they wanted to do that they would have to get to know you on the inside. It would be a whole lot easier to make friends that way, too. This is also the kind of quote I should really think about as well, because I know I'm too critical of people sometimes, and maybe I need to just try and block out the outside and focus on the inside.

The next quote I like is something that everyone should think about. It's not very explanatory; it's more of the kind of thing you have to think about for a while before you get a definition of what you believe. "WHEN GIVEN THE CHOICE BETWEEN BEING RIGHT OR BEING KIND, CHOOSE KIND" is the quote. I like that. Because most of the time, say in an argument, you want to be right-and don't even care if you're being kind or not. That is definitely not an easy thing to choose. When you're arguing, you don't care about being nice or thoughtful or being less stubborn and letting it go, you care about being right, and being right may not mean being kind, it may just mean you need or want the satisfaction of being right. That quote really made me want to try to be nicer, care more about kindness than being right, but, I'm still working on that one, because especially-at least I

think-for kids, that choosing right over kind is one of the most hard decisions ever. There is a part in the book where August is on an overnight fieldtrip and a group of 8th graders tease him and try to rip off his hearing aids, and no teacher can come to help because August *and* his friend Jack are basically lost. All of the sudden, the 8th graders get a little too shove-y, and some of the boys that were mean to August came out of nowhere and help August and Jack get away. This showed me that even mean-seeming, or people who you don't like can be good, you just have to try to get past the reasons you don't like them, because in the end, they could be the one who saves you. Obviously, you can't be friends with everyone but you can still choose kind. (Wink wink!)

“I think there should be a rule that everyone in the world should get a standing ovation at least once in their lives.” August says this later on in the book, and this quote, I decided, would be the motivational quote I needed to finish this. This-A Book That Shaped Me-really was one of the hardest things I've ever written. But after rereading that quote, I realized, in the end, there will be someone cheering for me, because I tried, and because they know everyone deserves that one standing ovation.

Omaha Beach and Beyond:

The Long March of Sergeant Bob Slaughter

Gavin Dent

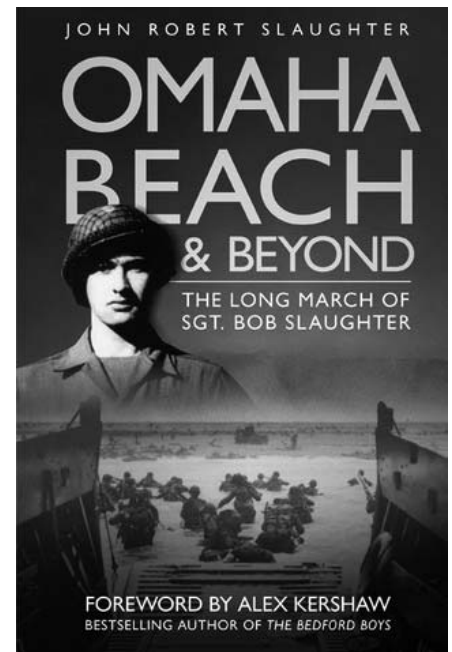
2nd Place Grand Prize & Virginia State Finalist

I often wonder what my classmates think about when the Pledge of Allegiance is said in school. When people go to the grocery store and see the American flag flying in the parking lot, what does it mean to them? Do people notice the older man at the restaurant wearing a hat that says WWII vet on it?

After reading the book *Omaha Beach and the Beyond, The Long March of Sergeant Bob Slaughter* by John Robert Slaughter, I think of the brave veterans of World War II almost every day. This book has made me realize how his generation of men has affected my life. This book is about Mr. Slaughter's personal account as a soldier in the D-Day invasion on Omaha Beach, France during WWII. Mr. Slaughter wrote, "Time changed for me at that moment, and my life would never be the same." I feel none of our lives would be what we know if it were not for what Mr. Slaughter and the other soldiers did, and I am thankful for these men every day.

Mr. Slaughter also wrote in his book that he and many of the men did not like to talk about their experiences. They felt like they did what they were expected to do and are not heroes. But there are heroes in this world and we might see them every day without realizing it. This book has intrigued me to learn more about history and the world around me. I am aware of more than school, friends and video games. I have become active in my community and in the 29th Infantry Division Association. I am grateful for other members of my community and I am proud of my community and country. I strive to have the character of these humble and brave men.

Reading this book is why I stand proud to say the Pledge of Allegiance. If I had not read this book I might not think of the battles our flag has been through. It is why when I see a veteran in the store, the park or anywhere, I hold out my hand to shake their's and say thank you.

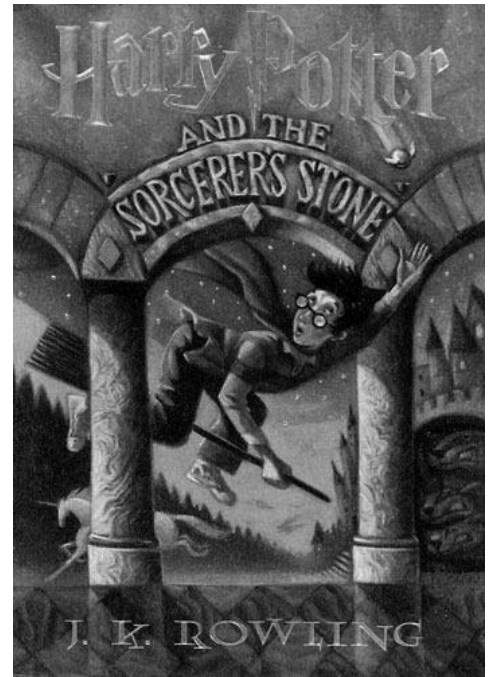


Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone

Audrey Gehm

Pennsylvania State Winner

When I heard about this contest, I knew that my essay was going to be about *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* by J.K. Rowling. It has shaped me in so many ways, such as improving my reading skills. At first, I was so nervous about reading this book—I mean, 309 pages, come on! That's a book of unspeakable volume! After all, I was only 7 years old. After reading the first couple chapters, I was addicted to "the boy who lived." This book was so compelling that I was eager to get to the next word. I was reading faster by the minute. I was GOING to finish that book, and the whole series, NO MATTER WHAT! By the time I was 8, I had finished the fifth Harry Potter book, *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*—all 870 pages of it! I was so proud.



Another example of how this book shaped me is how Harry, Ron, and Hermione helped each other in difficult situations. When retrieving the sorcerer's stone, they each saved one another at different points. Harry flew to get the key that opened the door, Ron helped play them across the chessboard, and Hermione figured out the riddle that got them through the fire. Those scenarios taught me to help my friends and family in life-threatening emergencies (not very likely) or when they just need someone to talk to (much more likely). Once, when my younger sister was having trouble with a bully, I gave her advice: ignore him, and he'll eventually lose interest. It worked; the bullying stopped.

After reading this book, it occurred to me that, truth be told, nobody has a "normal" life. A normal life to Harry, before he arrived at Hogwarts, was sleeping in a cupboard and being loathed by almost everyone he knew. To Ron, that would have been a really crazy way to live. I agree; I don't think I could live like that, either. But it showed me that people endure all sorts of hardships in life and we are stronger than we sometimes think.

Lastly, through Hermione's example, I learned to stand up for myself and my beliefs. She's such a good role model for many reasons. She defended herself when people made fun of her because her parents were muggles (non-magical people). I recently stood up for myself when I was playing Knockout (a basketball game) at summer camp. A boy told me that he was going to go easy on me, because it wasn't fair. So I said, "You're right, it's not fair...for you!" I can't remember if I lasted longer than him that particular game (there were a lot of kids playing), but I do know I've finished better than him several times since then because I've won the game multiple times.

Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone helped make me who I am today for many reasons, as I've just shared. I hope others will consider reading this book. It's a truly magical story that will be remembered for years to come. It can make an impact on the lives of those who read it, just as it has with mine.

Esperanza Rising

Carissa George

Pennsylvania Finalist

Bravery and persistence are essential if you are going through big changes in your life or coping with the loss of a loved one. Sometimes, authors include these gripping events in their writing. It can impact the reader by making them realize that they are very lucky if they haven't gone through any of the things that the characters in the book did. It might even influence the reader so much that it can make them a better person or give them courage in times when they are struggling themselves. In one book I read, I felt like I could connect to all of those things. *Esperanza Rising*, written by Pam Muñoz Ryan, is about a girl around my age who faced many setbacks throughout the story.



The main character in *Esperanza Rising* is a girl named Esperanza who lived in Mexico with her father, mother, grandmother, and their servants. They were wealthy and owned a vineyard. In many ways, Esperanza's family adored her, especially her father. All that changed when her father was murdered, and Esperanza's house mysteriously burned down a few nights later. Under threat of a greedy uncle who wanted to take over the land and household, Esperanza, her mother, and their servants flee to America to work on a campground that hired immigrant families. Coming from riches, Esperanza was not used to the horrible working and living conditions, frequent dust storms, and her immense grief. Esperanza also had trouble fitting in and doing her daily tasks of cleaning, cooking and caring for two young babies. She had never even held a broom before! Her mother also gets sick and went away for many months. However, throughout this book, Esperanza manages to adapt to her new life by finding strength and hope in caring for others.

Esperanza inspired me because she never let her struggles stand in her way of learning to live in her new community. This reminds me of a quote from famous writer, Ernest Hemingway: "Courage is grace under pressure." A time when I had to have grace under pressure was when my uncle died unexpectedly. My cousins, ages 12, 11, and 8, were very scared and heartbroken, but we came together as a family and helped them get through those painful first months. My sister and I kept their minds occupied by entertaining them with new games and just spending time together. I was upset myself, but did I let that stand in my way of cheering my cousins up? No way!

I also was impacted by this book because I realized how fortunate I am to have all the luxurious things that Esperanza and the rest of the immigrant workers didn't. I have my own room, air conditioning, television, a computer, and lots more too. If all of those things were taken away from me, I would feel like a polar bear being moved from Antarctica to Florida! After reading this book, I have been trying to help those in need more. I am planning to hold a fall event at our local library to collect new pajamas and books for children who don't have any. In conclusion, this book "shaped me" and impacted my life because I learned to be thankful and never take for granted the wonderful things in my life, especially my loving, supportive parents.

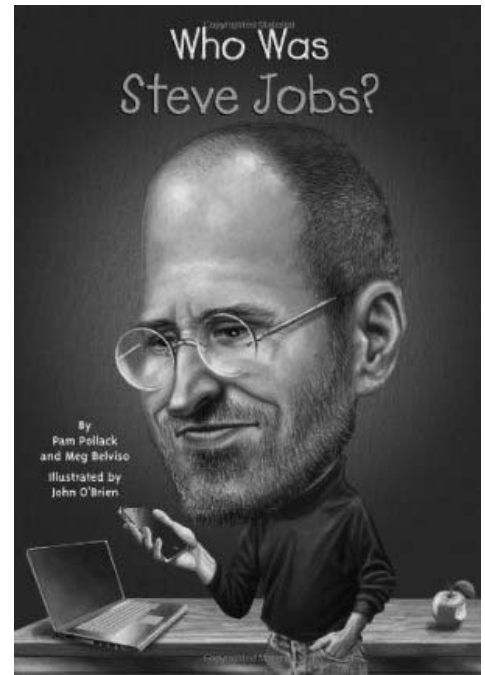
Who Was Steve Jobs?

Bryce Greco

Pennsylvania Finalist

Love your iPhone? Think glass buildings are interesting? Do you like being different? Well, Steve Jobs did and so do I!

The book, *Who Was Steve Jobs?* by Pam Pollack and Meg Belviso shaped me because Steve Jobs was different and I am different too. For example, Steve Jobs was different because he hated wearing shoes, so he stopped wearing them! I am different because I am smart and kids pick on me and call me a nerd. I am also different because I get along with my sister and I love her, where some of my classmates have told me that they want their sister to die!! They are so mean! When I found out that Steve Jobs and I were both different, I felt amazed and that it was okay to be different.



We are also the same because we are both very imaginative. I can create things with my mind and I don't need accessories for my toys, I just imagine them. For example, in my mind, couches can be houses, chairs can be buildings and tables can be mountains. Steve Jobs was very imaginative because he created Apple, Pixar, and NeXT. We have a lot in common because we are imaginative. Being imaginative will help you in life because you can create new things.

Steve Jobs and I are giant fans of George Lucas. Steve Jobs loved Star Wars so much that, in 1980, he bought out a theater for all the Apple employees to see *The Empire Strikes Back* together. I love Star Wars so much that I have a giant toolbox filled with Star Wars action figures! I wonder what Steve would think of Disney owning both Pixar AND LucasFilm? I think he would be happily surprised! He would also be thrilled to see the new Star Wars movie coming in December 2015. I can't wait for it!

The last thing in common between us is pancreatic cancer. My Nana was my grandmother on my mom's side. She was very special to me because she looked after me while my Mom and Dad went to work. She cared for me very much. We loved to throw animal parties with my stuffed animals. I loved having animal parties and being with her. In 2011, 13 days after Steve Jobs died of pancreatic cancer, my Nana died of the same terrible cancer. I miss my Nana enormously. I was unhappy and shocked that they died the same way, at the same time.

I chose the book *Who Was Steve Jobs?* for the "A Book That Shaped Me" contest because I found a lot in common between us. I enjoyed reading this book and learning about Steve Jobs. Reading the book made me feel surprised, self-confident, and sad. I hope other kids will enjoy reading this book also.

Counting by 7s

Christian G. Herald

Washington, DC Finalist

Before I read *Counting by 7s*, I was all over the place. Did I want to go here? Did I want to go there? Did I want to go anywhere at all? I couldn't decide, couldn't seem to make up my mind about anything. I wanted to do everything, go everywhere. The world is just such an interesting place, with so many interesting things. My mind was an explosion. Everyone could see it from miles and miles away.

Counting by 7s is about an adopted girl named Willow Chance, who loses her adoption parents in a car crash. Willow was destroyed because she lost everything in her life that mattered to her-her garden, her parents, her house-with no one to turn to. Until she meets a girl named Mai. Mai and her brother, Quang Ha, take her to their mother who takes her in from the foster care center that she was going to live in. Willow slowly learns that to be happy she has to do the things she loves. I learned that that really helps! Whenever I'm down I do the things that make me happy- reading, writing, listening to my music- fun things. Willow also makes a sunflower garden, which inspired me to start my own garden with my Grandmother this summer at her community garden. In the end, Willow learns that:

"I think that at every stage of living, there are 7 people who matter in your world. They are people you rely on. They are people who daily change your life. I see every one of these people like colors of the rainbow. They are vivid and distinct. And they hold a permanent place in my heart." *

Willow is right. There are 7 people who support you and bring you up when you are down. They also help you make decisions when you are confused and not sure where to go, and help you when you need it. I thought about it, and these are the 7 people in my life:

My mom

My dad

My dog

My friend Sydney

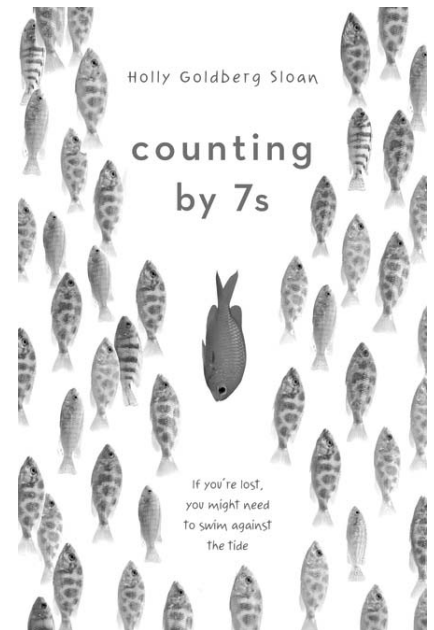
My Grandmother

My friend Leila

My friend Olivia

I love them. And they love me.

Now, after reading *Counting by 7s*, my mind is in a beautiful box. It has a key, and only I have that key. I share copies with the 7 people who support me to fulfill the dreams, hopes, and wishes in my box. My decisions are now narrowed down. My mind is like a firework. It is beautiful, and I can choose those who matter to have at my fireworks show.



*This quote was taken from the book *Counting by 7s* by Holly Goldberg Sloan pg. 377

Grace's Twist

Addie Hughes

West Virginia Finalist

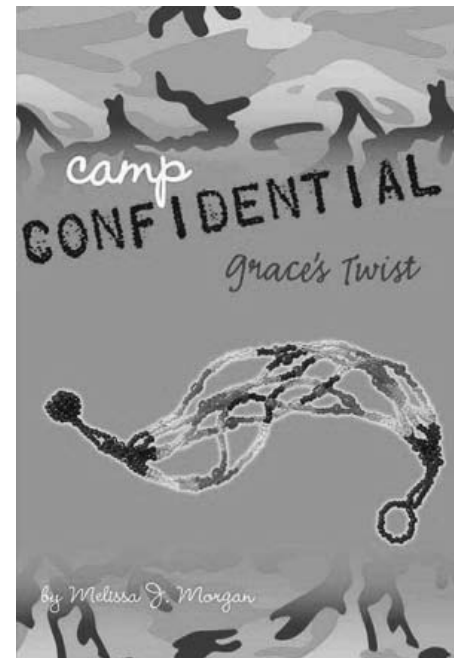
One of the many books that has a lot of influence on me is *Grace's Twist*, by Melissa J. Morgan. Camp Confidential is a prodigious, well written series, but *Grace's Twist* sticks out to me. It proves being nice to everybody is important, you should stick up for yourself and your friends, and you should be accepted for who you are. If this isn't a great guide in life, I don't know what is.

Being affable to everybody is important in life. In *Grace's Twist*, everybody in bunk 3C have to hold their tongues many times when Chelsea is rude. There's one point in the book when Grace tells everybody she failed reading in school. Chelsea says, "In reading? What kind of idiot fails reading?" Everybody in the bunk, including Grace, fought back nasty words. Another point in the book is when Grace visits her new "friend", Gaby, who lives in 3C's enemy bunk. Gaby welcomed Grace by saying, "What are you doing here? No one from your loser bunk is supposed to contaminate our bunk by touching it." Grace didn't say anything, thinking Gaby was kidding, but it still didn't feel right. The ancient saying, 'sticks and stones may break my bones but words will never hurt me' isn't true. Words can hurt badly. They lower self-esteem. Sometimes you can accidentally hurt your siblings or friends feelings, but what if they said it back to you? Grace has shown to me that everybody should work a little harder to protect one another's feelings.

Niceness is needed, but if it feels necessary, stand up for yourself and your friends. One point in the book, Chelsea is being rude, and a shy girl, Karen, stands up to her. "I knew it! I knew you were getting in trouble that day!" Chelsea cried triumphantly. "Chelsea don't" Karen said. Everyone was pleasantly surprised, since Karen was usually so timid. At another point, Gaby is wanting to cut in line at the water park in front of a girl she bullies, Christa. Gaby says, "Oh don't be such a baby. We'll only get in trouble if you tell. And you won't, right? You already snitched on me once. If you do it again, you'll be worse than a snitch. You'll be a rat." Grace stands up to her by saying, "You know what? I'm not gonna cut in line. I don't care if you make fun of me and call me a baby. You're a bully Gaby. It's not cool." Once again, Grace has proven a fact to me, stand up for yourself and others, it's not wrong.

The last but definitely not least reason I enjoy this book is that, in the end, Grace isn't afraid to talk about her problem, she proves that you shouldn't be embarrassed about your problems or difficulties. Grace doesn't have a learning disability, but reading isn't her strongest subject. The most recent year before camp, she was too busy goofing around; she didn't pay too much attention to reading and failed. In the beginning, she was frightened that her bunkmates would judge her if she told them, so she didn't. When everybody found out, they just accepted it and helped her read and take quizzes. On top of everything else Grace has taught me, this is the greatest. If you have a true friend, they'll accept you for who you are.

To summarize, *Grace's Twist* has a prodigious amount of influence on me. In many different, weird ways, Grace has helped me. I have different books that have helped me with different things, but this is the best so far. Everybody needs a guide in life, and this is one of mine. If you need help or answers, *Grace's Twist* is out there among many other helpful, guiding books.

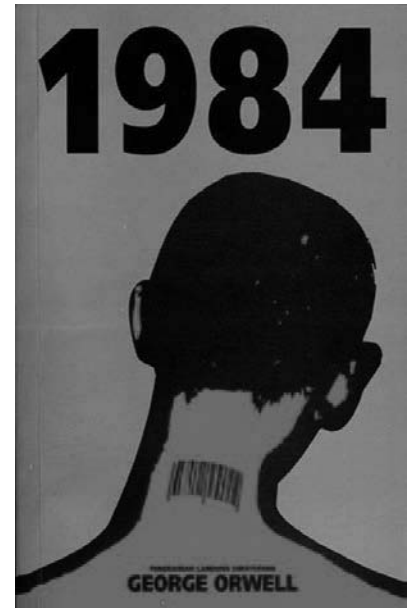


1984

Pasha Ishaq

Washington, DC Finalist

The reason I read *1984* by George Orwell was because I am interested in politics in general and I wanted a good book on politics and different ideologies. The effect that *1984* had on me was big. Before I read this book I didn't give much thought to government wrongdoing. After I read this book I had a completely new perspective and mindset on the world and its leaders, and the politics of their countries. The ideas and concepts that I've learned are: Dictatorships are truly cruel, maybe more than what I thought; extreme surveillance on your people is truly wrong; and you shouldn't always trust a government.



The first concept is that Dictatorships are truly cruel, maybe more than what I thought. For example, in the book many activities and things are outlawed. Even though there aren't any laws. For just thinking against the Party you are arrested. (In the book, this is called *Thoughtcrime*.) The government would do nothing in welfare and would leave the poor people on the streets. (In the book, poor citizens are referred to as the *Proles*.) The government doesn't even see the *Proles* as real human beings. Also, there is a room called "Room 101." It has everyone's fears and the worst things that can happen to them. This proves that the government is trying to oppress the people. The impact this has on me is to face my fears, and don't let my fears weaken me or be used against me. I have a few fears about starting middle school later this month, but I shouldn't let it stop me from enjoying what middle school has to offer and get involved.

The second concept is that extreme surveillance on your people is wrong. The book describes a device that is similar to a TV, but it could never be turned off and you could not change the channel. The *Thought Police* can see and hear you at all times. (In the book, the device is a *Telescreen*.) This made me think about the similarities to what happened recently with the NSA and its activities.

The third concept is that you can't always trust a government. Winston, the main character in the book, feels that Big Brother and the Party will do anything just to silence any critics, especially Goldstein. (Goldstein used to be a hero of the INGSOC Party, but then he betrayed them by controlling an underground resistance force against Big Brother - the Party's leader.) This means oppressive governments may lie to their people and use those with different views, like Goldstein in the book, as propaganda to raise support for themselves. Now I understand the importance of politicians on TV using Freedom of Speech to argue their different opinions without any fear.

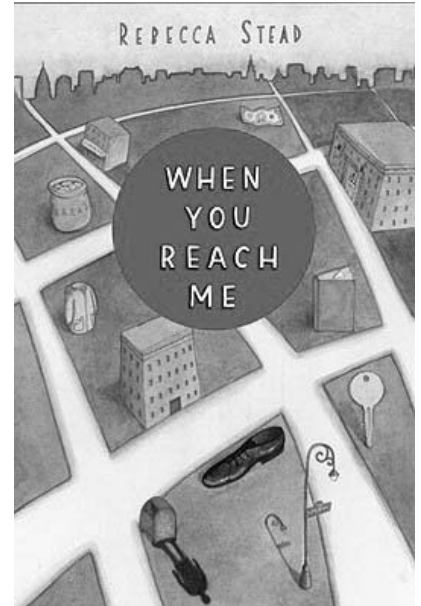
In conclusion, the three concepts I have learned from the book are: Dictatorships are truly cruel; extreme surveillance on your people is truly wrong; and you can't always trust a government. The importance of this book is that it gave me a new perspective and mindset on politics and on how life would be like in countries ruled by dictators who are basically inhumane and insane. Even though *1984* is a fiction, some of the events in the book are still possible and actually do happen today in non-democratic societies around the world. I now feel strongly about not taking for granted our Constitutional rights and freedom. The book, *1984*, showed me how a government should not be.

When You Reach Me

Cora Jackson

Maryland Finalist

When You Reach Me taught me that you should be more open to the world and make new friends. I was a lot like Miranda because we both lost our only friend. But instead, my friend moved away while Miranda's friend got punched and slowly started to reject her. I thought that I would never have another friend again. But when I read *When You Reach Me* and when Miranda met great new friends I knew that I could too. I just did what Miranda did which was to ask one simple question. Since she asked, "Do you want to go out to lunch?" I asked "Do you want to hang out at recess?" That was the beginning of one of the many friendships I would soon have.



When You Reach Me made me look at the world and friendships in a different way because when Miranda loses her only friend, it made me realize that it isn't just me and my only friend in the world. There are many others kids just like me and who want a friend. I just needed to step up and say hi like Miranda did to Anne-Marie.

This book isn't just about Miranda making new friends. There is a man who sleeps with his head under the mailbox around the corner who some people call Quakers, the kicker, or the laughing man. He makes amazing kicks and shouts crazy stuff. And Miranda gets these strange notes that say stuff like "I am coming to save your friend's life and my own." She also meets a boy her age named Marcus who knows a lot about time travel. He is also the one who punches Sal. But in the end, the book is basically telling you that you shouldn't judge people because people change.

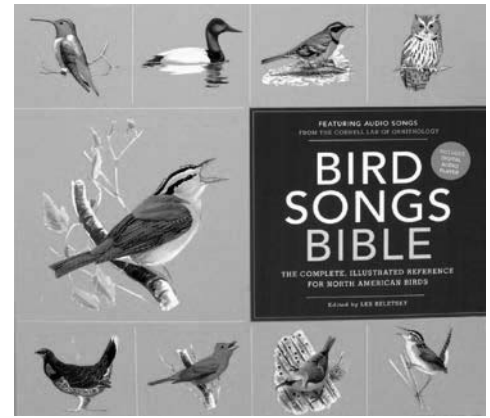
In the end, Miranda becomes friends with her arch enemy Julia. Miranda thinks everything is fine until Sal crosses the street when a ball hits him hard in his stomach and the laughing man jumps in front and gets run over by the truck instead of Sal. Miranda finds out that the laughing man was actually Marcus who traveled back in time and that the notes were from him. She is really upset and doesn't think anything could make her feel better until she goes over to Sal's house and he explains that he just needed to take a break from her to meet new friends. Then they start hanging out together again. That was another reason I loved this book and thought it teaches important lessons.

Bird Songs Bible

Ananda Kalukin

1st Place Grand Prize & Virginia State Winner

Have you ever played hide-and-seek with someone who has a beak, two wings and a tiny red crown? I did, last September, at a nearby park. That experience and the *Bird Songs Bible* changed the way I feel about nature and inspired my love of birds.



One day last September, despite my protests, my parents turned off the computer, dragged me down the stairs and out the front door to a small park for a walk. As always, when I was in nature, I felt bored with the bland surroundings. I started kicking around the dirt and stones scattered here and there. Suddenly, there was a rustling in the brush, and a tiny yellowish bird peeked out. It vanished in a flash. I tried to chase the bird as it darted around the park to figure out what it was. Eventually, it disappeared into a shrub. I didn't see it again that visit.

When I returned home, I decided to quickly satisfy my curiosity. A friend had given me the *Bird Songs Bible*, an enormous book I had never intended to read. But just this once, I carefully took the book down from the shelf and blew the dust off of it. I flipped through the pages to find a drawing of the elusive creature I had seen, and I played bird calls from the attached audio player. I was shocked to discover how many species he resembled. Just as surprising were the hundreds of birds he did not resemble. I couldn't help appreciating the many colorful, vibrant and lifelike illustrations of all these birds.

Of course, I couldn't figure out what he was that easily. I would return to the park many times with my camera and binoculars to play this game. One second he was posing on a branch. The next he would disappear and then cheep teasingly as if to say, "Can you find me?!" (or so it seemed.) Each time I consulted the book with my blurry pictures, I noticed there was so much interesting information on different species that was astonishing, funny and even sad. For instance, the Arctic Tern, migrates over 12,000 miles – from the North to South pole – and back again every year. Did you know that the Green Heron “fishes” using bread or worms as bait? Hawaii, at one time a tropical paradise, has lost most of its native bird species. I enjoyed telling other people about facts like these.

One day, I pointed my camera into the trees, as my frenemy flitted effortlessly through them. Then he stopped and winked at me. I held my breath and took a picture. He let me get a clear (prizewinning!) photograph of him among the yellow leaves, sweetly peering down at me from the highest branches. In case you're wondering, using the *Bird Songs Bible* I identified him as a Ruby-crowned Kinglet.

I checked him off the checklist in the back of the book, and for fun I decided to check off all the other birds I had seen. I realized how few North American birds I had seen, and I knew I wanted to see more. I urged my parents to take me to parks, gardens, and wildlife refuges. I took my camera and binoculars too. I returned from outings excitedly poring over my bird guide to identify the birds I had seen, update the checklist and learn more about the fascinating lives of these beautiful creatures.

So far, I have seen and photographed over ninety bird species. My ambition is to explore the hottest desert to the coldest tundra in North America, to see all the birds of the birds of the *Bird Song Bible*. Maybe someday, I can save some bird species from extinction. Nature isn't boring after all – it's filled with color and song- my guide book and a little bird told me.

Heidi

Huda Kose

Delaware Finalist

When I read the story *Heidi* I felt sorry for the main character, Heidi. I felt bad that no one wanted to keep her as a child. *Heidi* inspired me to make a difference in other kids' lives.

It all started about two years ago when my mom came to me and asked if I wanted to be part of a 99 orphan project. She explained to me that the group would do different activities in order to raise money for 99 orphans all over the world. At that time, I wasn't sure that I wanted to spend my time helping orphans.

Then I read *Heidi*. I felt really sad that Heidi's first caretaker carelessly dropped her off at her grandfather's house even though she knew her grandfather was a strange man who never talked to anyone in the village.

After reading some of the book, I started changing my feelings about the 99 orphan project. I realized that not many people care about orphans like their own parents would have. I also observed that orphans have many hardships in their lives, like Heidi did. Fortunately for Heidi, her grandfather became kind and gentle to her. I could tell that Heidi's grandfather was changing Heidi's life. This made me eager to do the same. Now I wanted to change orphans' lives.

Just as Heidi had a happy life, other orphans should have happy lives, too. Remembering Heidi, I became really determined to join the 99 orphans group. I wanted to put smiles on orphans' faces just like Heidi's grandfather put a smile on Heidi's. Without reading *Heidi* I would have probably not joined the 99 orphans group and would have not been able to make a difference in other orphans' lives. Thanks to the book *Heidi*, I helped kids like Heidi all over the world.



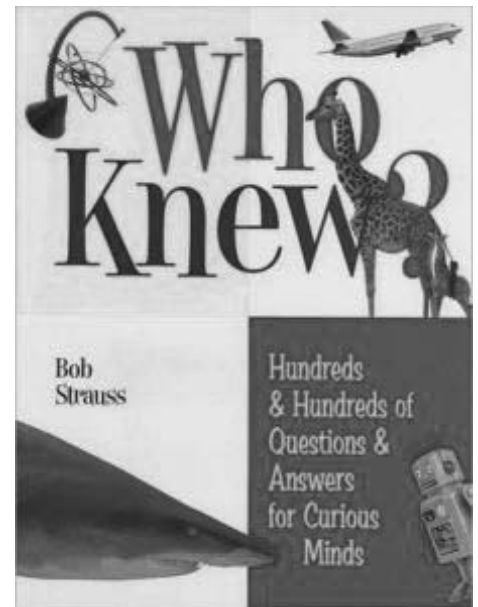
Who Knew?

Hundreds & Hundreds of Questions & Answers for Curious Minds

Brendan Lewis

Delaware Finalist

The book that changed me and my world is called *Who Knew: Hundreds & Hundreds of Questions & Answers for Curious Minds* by Bob Strauss. It answers almost any question you can imagine, like “Why do some camels have two humps?” and “What is a trebuchet?”! You may think that this wouldn’t inspire anybody to learn more, but this book definitely did. After reading the book, “Who Knew?” I felt like I wanted to learn more. The world was suddenly full of new questions, and I wanted to learn the answers.



For example, in the particle physics category, there was the question, “What is the Higgs Boson?” It went on to say it was a hypothetical particle that gave other particles their mass. I went to research it and I found out that the Higgs Boson has been detected by the scientists working at CERN, the best particle accelerator in the world! It made it official; I wanted to become a scientist. Scientists try to answer questions about different topics. Although I wanted to be a scientist before reading the book, I didn’t try and find answers to the most puzzling questions. This book made my curiosity grow. When I read it, I thought of many more questions that I could find the answers to.

The type of science I want to study is chemistry, because I’ve always wanted to mix things together and see what I’ve made. Another reason is the section of Chemistry in the book was very interesting! For example, it gives the answer to the questions “How do atoms stick together?” and “What is organic chemistry?” These are things that I never thought of before.

I know that the book “Who Knew?” changed me and my world. I also know that it has made me more curious and better at researching answers. It helped me recognize that I have a dream of becoming a scientist. One day, maybe I will be a real scientist working in a real lab! The book kick started a new scientist: me!

Wonder

Raquel Mandojana

Virginia Finalist

The book that shaped me is *Wonder* by R.J. Palacio. The story is about a boy named August “Auggie” Pullman. He is ordinary, except for his facial deformity. He has been homeschooled his whole life, but finds out that his parents are planning on sending him to a private school. He gets nervous and doesn't want to go to the school.

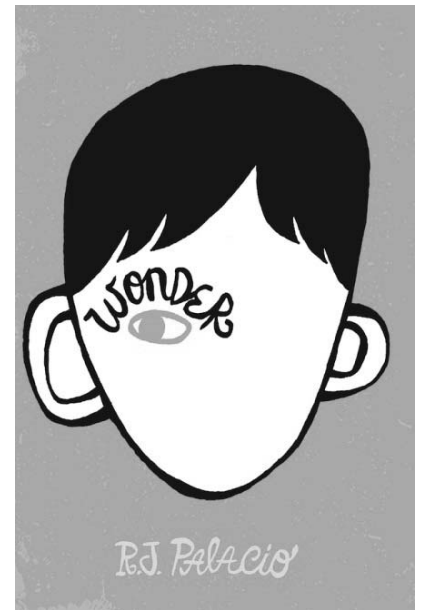
I understand how he must have felt about completely changing his future. I know that it is hard to go to a new school and make new friends. Auggie will have to come out of his safe shell and face reality. Once he does, he makes new friends, learns some lessons, and proves that it's what is on the inside that counts.

This book shaped me, because, like Auggie, I also learned some good life lessons: being a “new kid” is hard, looking different is definitely hard to adjust to, bullies are horrible, and you must believe in yourself.

Since Auggie had a facial deformity, people would look at him oddly and run away. That must be hard. At his new school, Julian cruelly bullied Auggie because of his face. I know how it feels to be new to a school and to be bullied. One of Auggie's classmates, a girl named Summer, saw Auggie sitting alone at lunch and invited him to sit with her. Summer saw right through Auggie's face and into his heart. She found that he was a nice, normal kid. Summer became Auggie's first friend at school. In the end, Auggie believed in himself, made more friends, and showed everyone that he was normal.

I know now how it must feel to have a facial deformity, and will definitely work harder to be nice to people who are different from me. Auggie was one brave kid. He was able to handle his challenges, so I know that I will be able to handle mine.

The book, *Wonder*, also inspired me to compose a song on my guitar. The music and lyrics that I wrote are attached.



Wonder Song Lyrics

A boy has a facial deformity
He tries to hide from his reality
But learns he'll go to school
Nobody thinks he's cool
The kids are just so cruel

To poor August Pullman

The second he walks through that door
Everyone tries to ignore
His face (pause)
Is so out-of-place

For poor August Pullman

He's a normal kid that's all
Forget the face
He's no disgrace

That strong August Pullman
That strong August Pullman!

By: Raquel Mandojana

Wonder Song

A boy has a fa-cial de-for-mi-ty he tries to hide from his re-a-li-ty but,
4 learns he'll go to school no-body thinks he's cool the kids are just so cruel
8 to poor August Pull-man the sec-ond he walks through that door
12 one-ry-one tries to ig-nore his face is so out of place for
16 poor August Pull-man he's-a-nor-mal kid that's all for get the face he's
20 no dis-grace that strong August Pull-man that strong Au-gust Pull-man
24
28

Rosa Parks

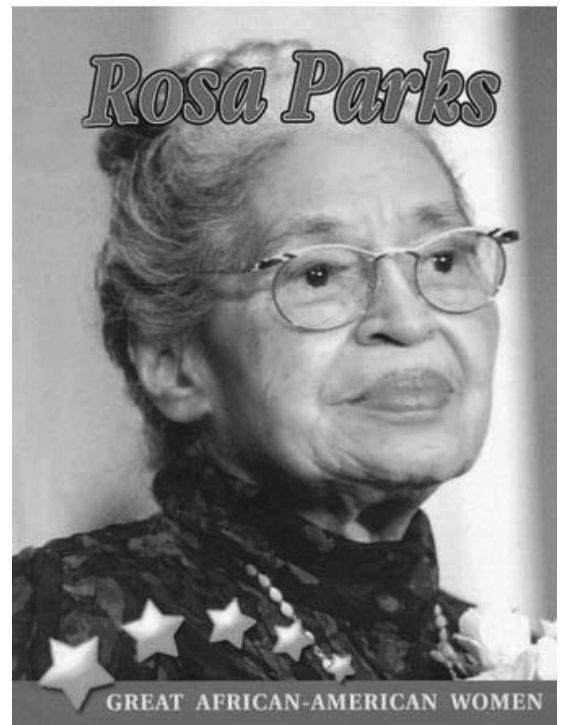
Isis Marks-Hamilton

Maryland State Winner

My name is Isis Hamilton and I am 11 years old. I read the book *Rosa Parks* by Erinn Banting. I learned that Rosa Parks was tired of being segregated. On December 1, 1955, the bus driver asked Rosa Parks to give up her seat for a Caucasian passenger. Rosa Parks refused, even though she knew she would be arrested. What she did inspired me because it taught me that no matter what, I will always have a choice.

When I was picked to play the role of Rosa Parks for black history month in 3rd grade, I performed a speech. My mom dressed me, and I studied my lines for days. Finally the day came, and I was ready. I had on a black and white dress, with my hair in a bun and my glasses on. Other parents told me I really looked the part. When I read about how Rosa Parks was so strong and stood up for what she thought was right, I knew deep down inside I was meant for good things to come. That speech made me feel like I was her and I felt so powerful.

What I've learned from this experience and from reading the book, is to always believe in myself and stand up for what's right. I have learned rules are set in place for a reason, but I will listen and follow my heart and what I believe. People like Rosa Parks did what they thought were right even if they did not change anything at that moment. I knew from her struggle, change had to come, and it was good. I have confidence in everything that I do. I also trust that I will make the right decision at all times. I join clubs just to voice my opinion. I say, "This is what I think", because just as Rosa Parks made a difference, my goal is to make a difference in everyone's life I encounter.



Ruttkowski; 68: Terrible Horrible

Finnian Mungovan

West Virginia State Winner

The book that shaped me this year was... oh, wait. I said that wrong. The book I helped shape was *Ruttkowski; 68: Terrible Horrible*, by Mark Jenkins and Nils Müller. The coolest thing about this book is that Mark Jenkins is also the artist who made the sculptures in the book, and I was the model for one of them! He uses me as a model a lot, though, because he is my uncle!

So here is an example of how Mark makes a sculpture of me: 1. He covers my body and head with plastic wrap. (Don't worry, he leaves a hole for me to breathe!) 2. He covers the plastic wrap with tape. 3. He cuts everything off with crazy, mutilated-looking scissors. 4. He tapes the cast back together. Sounds simple, right? NOT! Once he adds clothes, it looks just like me—except no face. Most of his sculptures are of human figures.

RUTTKOWSKI;68



MARK JENKINS (USA)

4/4/2014 - 18/5/2014

This book made me look at art in a different way. I learned that my uncle expresses his fears through his art. Who would want to meet one of his “Batters” (sculptures of men wearing ski masks and holding a baseball bat) at night? I wouldn't. But he turns his fears into his allies.

He places many of his sculptures on the street to see how people react. He did a project in Sweden of a little girl standing with her face to the wall, a stuffed bear a few meters away. Mark said they both expressed a feeling of being totally lost. Most people did not stop to try to help her. It made me look closer at the people I see on the street and wonder why they were there and if they were okay.

People today are just so sucked into their smartphones that they don't even notice or care about what's going on around them. This brings me to another sculpture in the book called “Til Death Do Us Part.” It shows a man hanging from a noose, still checking his phone. Not even death can stop Clash of Clans!

I used to wonder how he gets his street sculptures back. He doesn't! It wouldn't be street art if he got it back! People take them off the streets and keep them. He never watches for long, but he hears rumors. He once heard that a fire department picked one up and let it sit in the passenger seat of a fire truck! I really liked that his sculptures lead lives of their own after he leaves them.

I learned from this book that you sometimes have to stand back to really appreciate art. Literally. With Mark's art, when you stand far enough back, the rest of the scene and the people in it become part of the art. Also, you have to pull your head out of your smartphone before you can appreciate art. Or life.

So... the shape of me is in this book. By having my shape in the book, I helped shape this book. By helping to shape the book, the book helped shape me... oh great. Now my brains are scrambled.

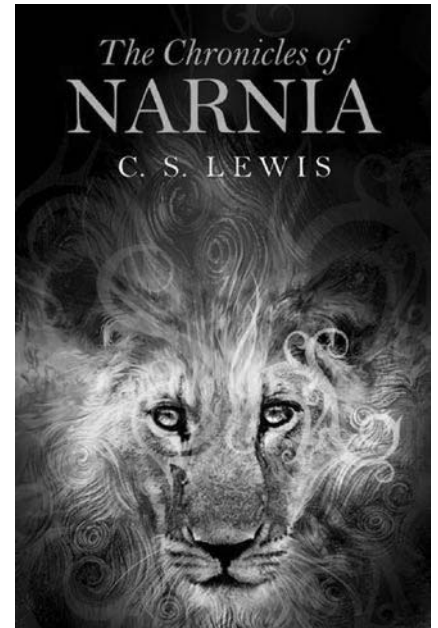
The Chronicles of Narnia

Udbhav Muthakana

Virginia Finalist

Gabriel Garcia Marquez, a famous author, once said, "... a novelist can do anything he wants so long as he can get people to believe in it." C.S Lewis has certainly done a great job of this with his captivating *Chronicles of Narnia*.

This book completely changed the way I see ordinary objects. Its spellbinding fantasy altered what I expected to see at any given moment. I would open the door to my closet, and expect to see the beautiful land of Narnia, with trees sky-high, and shimmering lakes. Whenever I look at the groundhog hole in our backyard, I think of the possibility that it might be a passageway to an underground fortress.



With adventures abound, *Chronicles of Narnia* never left me bored. As Prince Caspian raced through Narnia on horseback to save the talking beasts, my knuckles turned white. As the passengers of the *Dawn Treader* sailed to find the Seven Lords of The Sea, my heart raced with excitement. After reading the book, I was actually inspired to take more risks. When we went camping recently, I climbed a three hundred and fifty foot waterfall! This act of mine was inspired by how the three children daringly escaped from an underground fortress all alone.

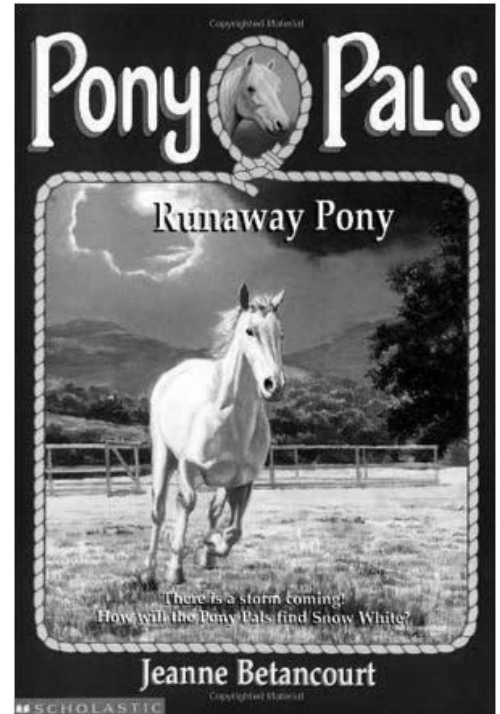
The spellbinding fantasy in *Chronicles of Narnia* captured my imagination. The heart-racing adventure entertained me extremely well. Even after I finished reading the book, I would think about it a lot. How would I have done as Peter, with so much responsibility as High King, and no one to guide me? I really believe that all of the events in the book really happened long ago at the start of humanity. C.S Lewis had- truly written a great book, and proved what Gabriel Garcia Marquez said.

Runaway Pony

Beth Nichols

West Virginia Finalist

The book I prefer is called *Runaway Pony*, written by Jeanne Betancourt. The reason I picked the book was because I love ponies! The personal impact it had on me was how the girl Lulu in the book had no parents and lived with her grandmother. It surprised me that Lulu's father worked so far away and didn't want to be close to his own daughter because my parents are not together anymore and my Dad works close to home to take care of me. In the book *Runaway Pony* it also talks about Lulu's friends always being there for her like my friends are always there for me. It makes me feel that if you push someone so hard and believe in them they will have the strength to do anything. And no matter where you are or what you're doing or who you're with you can always love. No matter if it's a pony or a friend you have someone to the end!



Lanie

Ashlie Price

Maryland Finalist

A book that shaped me is *Lanie The American Girl of the Year 2010* by Jane Kurtz. This book is about a girl named Lanie and she loves the outdoors. She and her friend, Dakota, both dream about being scientists.

But, this summer Dakota is traveling across the world. Lanie will be all alone because she is the only person in her family that likes the outside. Lanie discovers her favorite Aunt is coming to stay with them. She and her Aunt discover that the beauty of nature is everywhere.

Lanie and her Aunt go on adventures. During their adventures they give facts about science and nature. I love this book because Lanie is a lot like me and this book teaches you tons of interesting things. This book makes you stick to it and to never stop reading! I love it!

This book shaped me because of my interaction with nature. My passion with nature has grown a lot after reading this book. I love going outside and learning about what nature has to offer. Maybe I will also become a scientist one day!



The Wonder of Charlie Anne

Emma Samples

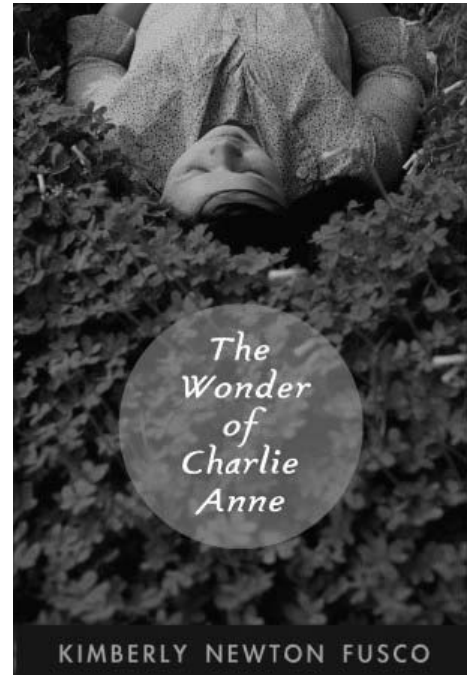
West Virginia Finalist

The Wonder of Charlie Anne is very interesting and creatively written. I liked it so much that I read it three times. I highly recommend this book to any reader, because it is a very emotional and heartwarming story.

Charlie Anne is just the normal farm girl growing up during The Great Depression. Her Mama died after having her sixth child. On the day of the funeral, Charlie Anne's Aunt Mirabelle decides to come and live with them. Soon after, her Papa and her older brother, Tomas, go up North to help build roads, promising to send money home every month.

Charlie Anne had many jobs to do on the farm, but she neglected some to go and sit by her Mama's grave and talk to her. Charlie Anne missed Mama very much. One day her neighbor, Old Mr. Jolly, came back from Mississippi with his new wife Rosalyn and their adopted daughter Phoebe, an African- American. But when hatred turns the town ugly, it's up to Charlie Anne and Phoebe's friendship to show them that your heart can always expand.

From this book I learned that you are never guaranteed tomorrow and that you should love and cherish the people around you and that sometimes you have to make sacrifices for others. I also learned not to judge people by what they look like, what they wear, or what color their skin is.



The Year of the Dog

Kalina Sloat

Washington, DC Winner

What year is your special year? For Grace Lin, who was born in the year of the tiger, the year of the dog should be lucky for her, because Grace's best friend Melody Ling says tigers and dogs are friends.

But after Grace has her science project turned down by a scientist, gets blue leggings instead of black ones for Halloween (by accident) and is a munchkin in the school play, things are looking bad for her.

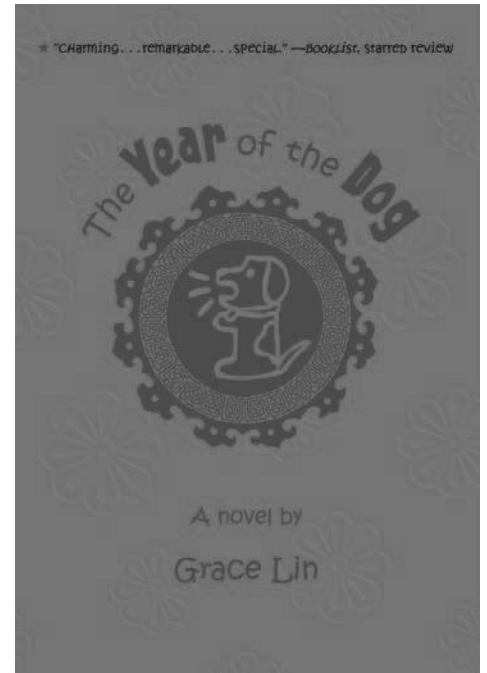
Until one day, a surprise announcement is made. Grace won 400 dollars for her book, *The Ugly Vegetables*!

The Ugly Vegetables helped her find herself, now she knows she has talent as an author, just like *The Year of the Dog* helped me. I think *The Year of the Dog* shaped me because like Grace, I'm Taiwanese-American and I share some of the same worries and thoughts.

We both feel that to Americans, we're too Taiwanese, and to Taiwanese people we're too American. Grace and Melody are the only Asians in their school, so, people treat them differently. I'm not the only Asian in my school, but I get stared at. Then, in Taiwan, people whisper “mei guo ren” (which means American) whenever they see me.

I have been called a Twinkie just like Grace. Twinkies are yellow outside but white inside. This is a huge insult to Asians. Grace was called a Twinkie because she can't speak Chinese. I was called a Twinkie because of my looks.

The Year of the Dog taught me to see the world differently, now I know I can be who I am and not let my race, appearance or other people stop me, just like Grace.



TinTin in America

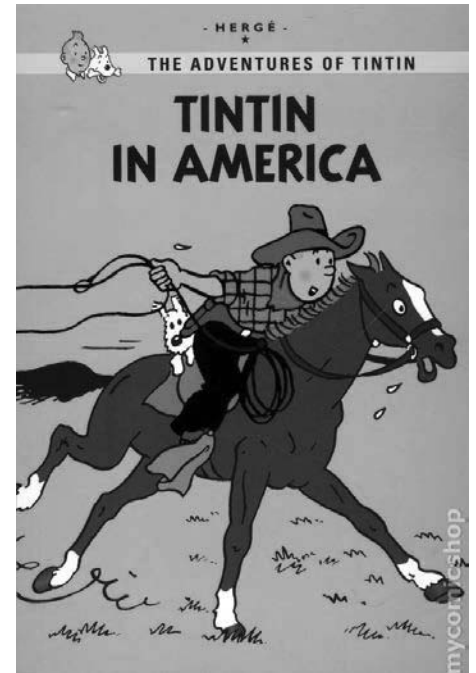
Colton Steltzer

Pennsylvania Finalist

About three years ago I was given a book called *TinTin in America*. It was a graphic novel about a European who was sent to America to try to round up a gang of criminals and save New York. As I read this book, I got so interested in the characters and their actions that when I was finished I wanted to read more. In addition to reading the rest of the *TinTin* series, I eventually got interested in other adventurous chapter books such as *Alex Rider*, the *Red Wall* series, and *Star Wars* and my enjoyment of reading has increased. In fact, now that I am reading chapter books, I attribute my ability to read for hours on end with having started with a good book like *TinTin*.

Another way that the *TinTin* series has affected me is through inspiring me with the way *TinTin* always uses his intelligence and creativity to crack the case. For example, through his knowledge of an upcoming solar eclipse, he tricked the Incas who had captured him into releasing him. These dangerous escapes always make me want to be able to think quickly and draw from past knowledge. I often find myself pouring over spy books for information (Just in case).

Finally, the *TinTin* series has affected my family and friends through my enthusiasm of reading them. Over the years I have shared my collection with my neighbors and friends and have encouraged them to read more. We gave *TinTin* to my young cousin for Christmas so he could also learn to enjoy books like I do. Through my influence, my family has enjoyed reading the *TinTin* series immensely. *TinTin* gave me a passion for adventurous books that still continues to this day.



The Vanishing Coin

Zula Stenger

West Virginia Finalist

The Vanishing Coin is one of my favorite books, and the book that shaped me.

“Nine year old Mike was sitting outside the principal's office. Fourth grade was supposed to be a fresh start, but he was right back where he always was. Every year since kindergarten, at least once a week, he was in trouble.”

“He wasn't a bad kid. He wasn't mean. He didn't hurt anyone. He just couldn't sit still.” Mike got into a lot of trouble, but magic changed it all. It made him excited for his everyday life.

One of the things in this book that shaped me was that if you find one thing that you love then everything is better. For Mike, it was magic; for me, it is 4-H camp. Magic gave Mike confidence that he could do anything he wanted to do. Camp gives me happiness; wherever I go I feel like I'm right back at 4-H camp again.

The second thing I learned from this book is if you find a good friend it makes a difference. Mike's best friend is Nora. She is an intelligent and overall good girl. She pushed Mike to be a better person, just like my best friends and I push each other to do better. This book shows you how much friends really mean. They can change your whole life.

The third thing is that life has its up and downs, but it will get better. You have to try your hardest at everything you do, and be the best person you can be. For Mike school was the down, and magic was his up. Magic even made school better as the other kids started to notice him and his magic tricks.

This book is one of the best books you will read. It has really shaped me more than any other book I have ever read. I loved this book so much that I'm half way through the second book and hoping the third book will be out soon.



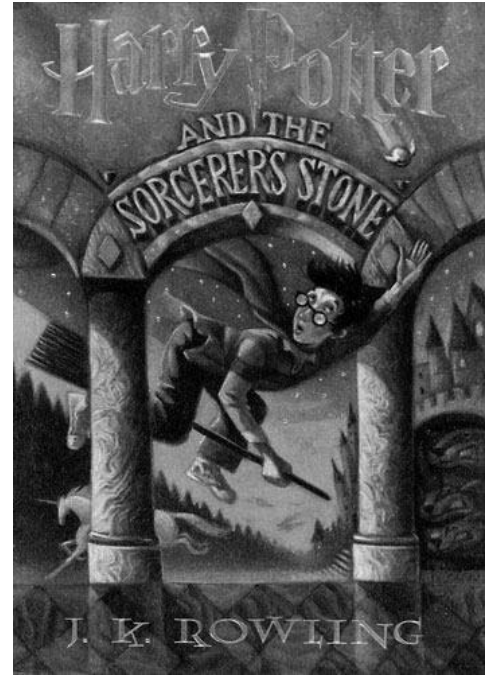
Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone

Nathalie Trouba

Maryland Finalist

Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone has shaped me in many different ways, one of which created a stronger bond with my little brother. Two other reasons are that I relate to one of the main characters and that it started my interest in the fantasy genre.

I will first talk about how the book formed a stronger bond between my little brother and me. Before this my brother and I didn't really share many interests. Sure we both liked chocolate but this was different. It all started this year when my Mom told me that I should read the first Harry Potter book to my little brother. That is when we both discovered that we liked the story of Harry. Our favorite chapter was when Hagrid the giant hatched a baby dragon named Norbert. Now my brother and I have something in common; *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*.



Now I will talk about how I relate to one of the main characters, Hermione Granger. Hermione is a straight A student who can sometimes act a little bossy. She never breaks the school rules, unless in danger and she has hair that will never stay in place. She is muggle born meaning that she was born from parents who are not wizards. I can relate to her in many ways. Most of the time I get straight A's. I can be a little bossy from time to time and don't get me started about my hair. Most importantly, she has taught me that it is okay just to act like myself.

Finally, I am going to talk about how this book started my interest in the fantasy genre. Before I read this book, I didn't really have an interest in any type book. The reason that I read this book is because my best friend kept telling me how much she liked it. When I read this book it opened a whole new world to me of magic and wizards, etc. If it weren't for Harry, I probably wouldn't read as well as I do today.

To conclude this essay about how *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* impacted my life, I ask you to read this book. It might just impact yours too.

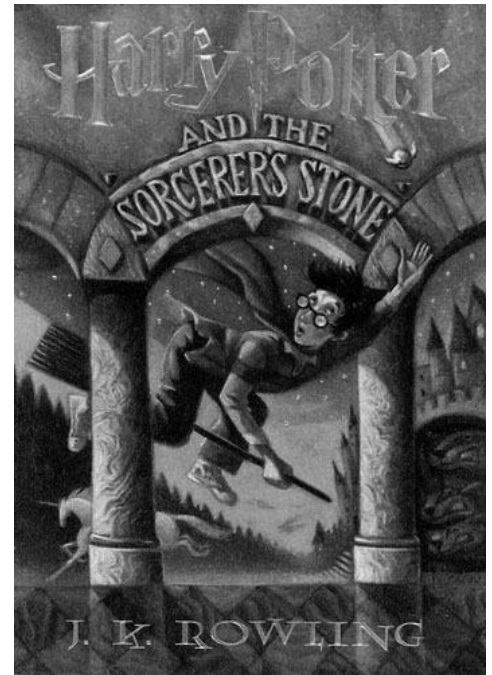
Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone

Lucy Verlaque

Delaware Finalist

Magic, friendship, and love. Those are the three words I would use to perfectly describe *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*. I began my wondrous journey into the “wizarding world” during second grade, when my parents introduced me to their copies of the stories. After finishing the first of J.K. Rowling's fabulous seven Harry Potter books, I became intrigued by the whimsical world of magic she portrayed. Eager to read more of her creative work, I soon finished the entire series in about eight months. Though all the books were marvelous, and I enjoyed every moment of reading them, none of them were as admirable and inspiring as *The Sorcerer's Stone* was.

Even in my earlier years, writing was something I adored more than anything; I would type short stories on the computer and print them out for my family to enjoy. But as I scanned the final sentences on the last page, I knew J.K. Rowling was my role model. I then decided that I would become an author just like her, and write stories as detailed and beautiful as hers.



Not only did *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* motivate me to start taking my writing seriously, it also made me realize the true meaning of friendship and love. At the beginning of the book, Harry had no friends, and even worse, he was tormented by his own family members: Uncle Vernon, Aunt Petunia, and his cousin, Dudley. He thought he was going to spend the rest of his life living in the cupboard under the stairs in his uncle's house. Harry's dreaded future was changed after receiving a letter from Hogwarts's School of Witchcraft and Wizardry; it turned out he was a famous wizard in a whole different world, and he was invited to learn and practice many different types of sorcery at Hogwarts. At school, Harry met Ron Weasley and Hermione Granger, who became his best friends and were loyal to him throughout the book. The way the trio stuck together and aided each other the whole time demonstrated what a true friendship should be like. I've always felt tighter with my friends ever since discovering the meaning of a strong connection like Harry, Ron, and Hermione's.

The Sorcerer's Stone also showed me what true love is. I realized that love doesn't have to come from two people who are keen on each other; it can be found anywhere, like from a mother and her son. Lord Voldemort, a wicked, heartless wizard who murdered others, tried to kill Harry when he was a baby. His parents protected him, leading to both their deaths. Lily Potter, Harry's mother, pleaded for Voldemort to kill her instead of her baby. Her love for her son was so strong that she sacrificed her life for Harry's. Voldemort still attempted to murder him after slaughtering Lily, but his spell backfired and he was destroyed-but not completely.

I didn't understand how a one-year-old could defeat a powerful wizard such as Voldemort, but my lingering question was answered when Professor Dumbledore told Harry: “Your mother died to save you. If there is not one thing Voldemort cannot understand, it is love. Love as powerful as your mother's for you leaves its own mark. To have been loved so deeply, even though the person who loved us is gone, will give us some protection forever.” This quote means a lot to me, because it taught me the meaning of true love. *The Sorcerer's Stone* made a huge impact on me, and nothing now can change the way I look at the world and my life.

Matilda

Brynn Yates

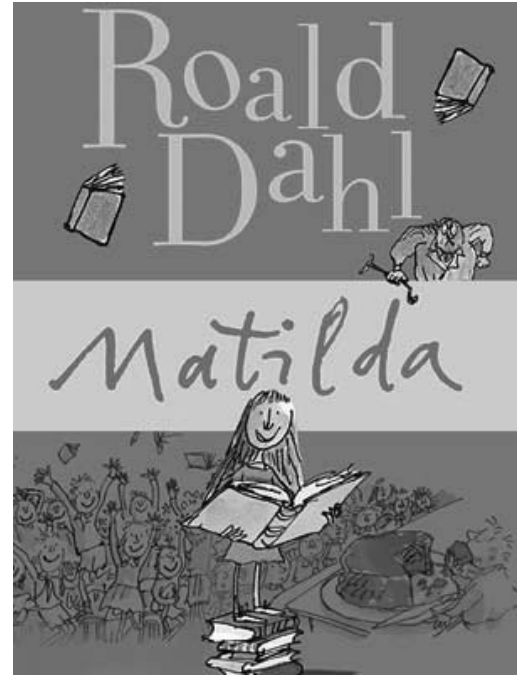
Maryland Finalist

A book that shaped me is *Matilda* by Roald Dahl. This book shaped me because it is about a girl named Matilda who nobody liked. Her dad calls her boy even though she is a girl. Her mom said that she should not read, and girls should not be smart. The only one who likes her is her teacher, Mrs. Honey. Matilda likes to go to the library, and has to go to school soon. The principal is so mean and blames things on Matilda even though she does not do them.

It shaped me because she tells herself that she is in a story and she can change her own story which is her life. Her parents do bad things. Her dad is a car dealer and he changed the miles on the cars so Russians would buy them to race, and her dad cheated and she tells him that was wrong and that was lying.

I never thought how bad someone's life could be, because my parents love me and so does the principal. I started being more grateful of what I have, and not thinking about what I do not have. Not everyone has to like me. The people, who like me, like me and I am glad because they do. It is possible nobody could like me. At least my Stepdad and Dad do not call me a boy and that is good because I am a girl.

After reading this book now I know not to lie or trick people, and to be grateful for what I have, and do not have. It is also good to be nice to everyone and read a lot of books.



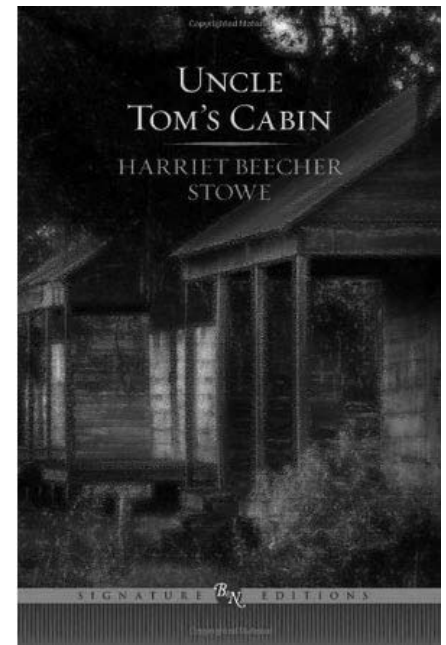
Uncle Tom's Cabin

Cassie Zhang

Washington, DC Finalist

On an unusually chilly summer night, a young girl glides back and forth from the shallow end to the deep end. 1 lap, 2 laps, 3 laps....5 laps! Can you believe that, 3 weeks ago, she wouldn't even go near the 4 ft. sign? Well, that young swimmer is me, and if it was not for a book I would still be shivering when I got near the deep end of the water!

That book is *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, written by author Harriet Beecher Stowe in 1852. This novel is a touching historical-fiction literature that portrays many morals or themes. Two of the most important themes I've learned are to be brave and be grateful.



In *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, the slaves have to suffer many hardships. For example, protagonist Uncle Tom was torn apart from his wife, Aunt Chloe, kids, and baby. I used to only care about little things like my parents fulfilling my wants, but when I see that Uncle Tom only wishes to be with his family I realize that I shouldn't take my family for granted. Further on, I've started valuing my family greater than all the small things, things I used to care more about.

From Uncle Tom, I've also learned to be courageous. When his wicked master Simon Legree, threatens to "break him" (flogging him to death), if he doesn't confess the place where two runaway slaves Cassy and Emmeline are hiding; Tom still persists in keeping quiet. Reflecting upon, Tom's courageous action, when I have to face obstacles or troubles I stand strong; no matter how big the matter is I show no fear.

For example, I was touched greatly by Uncle Tom being brave enough to not fear Legree's death threat. I realized that if Tom doesn't fear death, I won't have to fear deep water. As you can see, I eventually overcame my fear, and nothing, not even deep water, can stop me from reaching the other side of the pool. Therefore, Uncle Tom has "taught" me how to swim.

When, I look back on how Tom's troubles, I realize my troubles are very tiny compared to his. As a result, ever since reading this book I have changed to a better person.

"A BOOK THAT SHAPED ME" SUMMER WRITING CONTEST AWARDS CEREMONY

OCTOBER 18, 2014

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